



**Spotlight
Initiative**



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Acronyms

AA	Administrative Agent
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COVID-19	CoronaVirus Disease 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CS-RG	Civil Society Reference Group
CSRGs	Civil Society Reference Groups
EU	European Union
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GRGs	Global Reference Groups
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer and Intersex
OSC	Operational Steering Committee
RG	Reference Groups
RUNOs	Recipient United Nations Organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SI	Spotlight Initiative
ToRs	Terms Of References
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
USD	United States Dollars
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WPHF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Spotlight Initiative invests across the six Pillars of its comprehensive Theory of Change. Cumulatively, from the start of the Spotlight Initiative, the Fund has allocated the largest share of resources towards work on prevention, to address the underlying causes that perpetuate violence against women and girls, followed by investments in services, improving accessibility, availability, and quality. This score card presents the findings of the SI under the following indicators: Indicator 1, Indicator 2, Indicator 3b, Indicator 5. (a), Indicator 5(b), Indicator 5 (c), Indicator 5 (d), Indicator 7. Indicator 8, Indicator 10, Indicator 11, Indicator 12, Indicator 13, Indicator 14, Indicator 18, Indicator 21 and Indicator 22. To generate this global scorecard report and reflect on the progress made by countries implementing the SI, the consultant engaged with CS-RGs from the global, regional and national levels using virtual focus group discussions and also conducted a review of the Spotlight publications, guidance notes (for example, on programme budget, compensation and meaningful participation), guidelines and other relevant materials for the assignment such as Terms of References (ToRs), Workplans, Calls for proposals and others. These were significant in providing an analysis on the key performance indicators for the SI.

From the first score card of 2019-2020, there has been significant positive change in the performance of the SI based on the current analyses. The findings have shown the relevance and immense contribution that has been played by the SI programme and the engagement of the civil society in providing advisory role and supporting the implementation of the SI programmes by strengthening movement building, amplifying the voices of women and girls experiencing GBV and with limited access to SRH services. The SI programme has been instrumental in adopting an inclusive, human rights-based, and feminist approach to funding that disrupts the existing landscape and deep-rooted power imbalances to shift money and decision-making power to grassroots and local women's organizations and movements. This scorecard report will highlight how the SI has promoted meaningful engagement of inclusion and funding to, civil society, improving accessibility to resources for the local groups/grassroot organisations.

INTRODUCTION

The Spotlight Initiative is a proven model of multilateralism and multi-stakeholder partnership and engagement toward ending violence against women and girls. Launched in 2017 with a significant seed investment from the European Union, the Spotlight Initiative is a flagship programme of the United Nations Secretary- General, and a demonstration fund for UN Reform and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Spotlight Initiative is led from the highest political levels at both the United Nations and

the European Union. The Spotlight Initiative has proven that a significant, concerted and comprehensive investment in gender equality can foster transformative impact in the lives of women and girls. It represents a unique opportunity to demonstrate how working as a Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) model fund and a demonstration fund for the United Nations (UN) Reform can accelerate efforts to end violence against women and girls, and advance the SDGs more broadly. This chapter presents an overview of the Initiative's governance structure and funding allocations for 2022, as well as its strategic partnerships, which are central to its sustained impact.

In 2017, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) announced the Spotlight Initiative (hereinafter "Spotlight"), a €500 million investment to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG). In response to recommendations from feminist and women's rights movements, and in line with its principle of meaningful engagement, Spotlight established Civil Society Reference Groups (CSRGs) at the national, regional and global levels with the triple role to *advise*, *advocate* and hold Spotlight *accountable* to its commitments to women, girls and intersectional feminist movements.

This scorecard is a result of the independent efforts of the Global CS-RG to monitor Spotlight processes and systems, with a focus on participation, funding mechanisms, disbursement and implementation, taking into account Spotlight's response to activists' integrated protection. It is a way to take stock of what is working well, and where Spotlight can do better in its efforts to be a model fund for eliminating violence against women and girls including vulnerable groups. The Scorecard does not assess the impact of Spotlight programming and outcome results, which is left to formal mid- and end-term evaluations. Rather, it assesses the extent to which Regional Spotlight processes and systems support the participation, protection and involvement of civil society in general, and feminist activists and women's movements, in their work to end VAWG.

This score card is based on a previous score card developed for the 2019-2022 report. It is also informed by various sources of information including SI annual reports.

REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

The report draws from:

- 2021 and 2022 SI Annual reports, both of which provide insights into the performance on the SI based on various indicators.
- 2019-2020 Global Score Card
- CSRG Terms of references
- RG survey December 2022

- UN Trust Funds calls for proposals
- The 2019 WPHF Call
- Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund & Spotlight Initiative, Call for Proposals for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda, June 2019

ANALYSIS

PARTICIPATION

Indicator #1 Percentage of representatives from independent civil society organizations, particularly women’s rights, feminist and intersectional feminist movements, that participate as full members of all governance bodies, including the Global Governing Body.

There are two tiers of governance at the global level: the Governing Body, which is the highest tier, followed by the Operational Steering Committee (OSC). The Executive Office of the Secretary-General manages and coordinates the Spotlight Initiative, while the Administrative Agent (AA) administers the Fund, and the Fund’s Secretariat manages the regional investments through the programme portfolio. This structure supports decision-making, quality assurance and oversight. Spotlight responded to advocacy from feminist groups in the creation of the Global Reference Group itself and comprised of many constituency-led women’s rights/feminist organizations and movements at its establishment. All members have solid knowledge of women’s rights and self-identify as woman’s rights and/or feminist movement actors.

The Global Civil Society reference group of the SI is made up of 15 eminent members from civil society with expertise in the field of ending violence against women. These are drawn from sectors such as HIV, academia, LGBTQTI, disability. According to the 2021 SI Annual report, representatives of women’s rights groups and human rights-based civil society organizations (including those representing groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination) ¹have been critically engaged in shaping the Initiative from its inception through governance and advisory roles².

¹ 2021 Spotlight Global Annual Report.

² SI 2021 Global Annual Report

Notably, civil society, including feminist and women’s rights organizations, maintain meaningful participation and membership across all of Spotlight Initiative’s decision-making bodies, including at the highest level: one representative from the Global Civil Society Reference Group (CSGRG) serves on the Operational Steering Committee, and one sits on the Governing Body. In the spirit of Civil Society Engagement³, the Spotlight Initiative’s work is rooted in research that amplifies the belief that the leadership and deep engagement of civil society is at the core of transformative and sustainable change in the elimination of violence against women and girls and those facing intersecting forms of discrimination. Civil society, in particular women’s rights and feminist activists and movements, is therefore a central and paramount partner of the Spotlight Initiative. The SI’s partnership is guided by

- A human right based approach
- Leave no one behind principle
- National ownership

To enable effective functioning and participation in governing bodies, members of the RG must be adequately resourced. In 2022, the total budget for National and Regional Civil Society Reference Groups’ work plans reached USD 2,171,488, compared to USD 745,229 for the previous reporting period. An additional USD 80,000 was also allocated to the Global Reference Group. The costed Reference Group work plans provided the Reference Groups the autonomy to define their priorities and engage in relevant activities. According to the 2022 SI report, it highlighted that in Argentina, for example, the Reference Group members co-led and co-designed the Spotlight Initiative’s communication campaign #EsPosible una vida libre de violencias (a life free from violence is possible) during the 16 Days of Activism, which reached over 3 million people on social media. In this regard, the campaign focused on ending gender-based violence from an intersectional perspective. It has also been noted that to sustain civil society’s efforts in the Spotlight Initiative’s governance structures, for example, the National Reference Group members in Uganda participated in the proposal writing for the successor programme Gender for Development in Uganda and used their roles to advocate for increased gender funding. Important to note, is that the Reference Group is also represented on the Spotlight programme’s exit committee to ensure civil society’s perspective is embedded in the programme’s transition plan (SI Global Annual Report 2022).

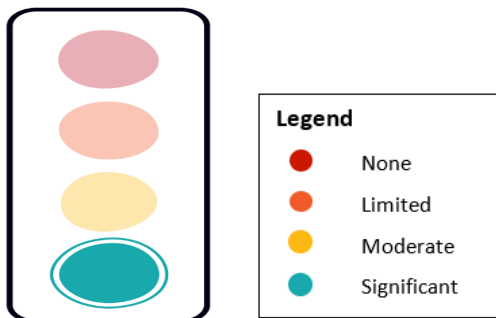
A key lesson learnt of reference groups is that, as a model for ensuring participation of civil society in governance and decision-making on ending violence against women and girls, they are a critical component of the national response on violence against women and girls. An

³ Civil Society Engagement | 2022 Spotlight Initiative Global Annual Report

example is that of the RG in Liberia. The Civil Society National Reference Group conducted two monitoring visits in four Spotlight programme countries in 2022. The group’s monitoring report and recommendations were delivered at the National Steering Committee, resulting in a pledge by the Government of Liberia and the National Council of Chiefs and Elders of Liberia to begin to raise awareness among traditional leaders and monitor activities around the “6-count Anti-FGM Policy”, which banned female genital mutilation (FGM) in Liberia for three years.

Analysis - In the Initiative’s early days, the GGB included a civil society representative in an observer capacity only, not as a full member. The four full members were limited to the co-chairs – the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, and the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission – along with the Development Commissioner of the European Commission, and the Executive Director of UN Women⁴. There is now consistent representation of the CS-RG at the highest decision-making bodies. It is also clear that recommendations made by the CS-RG members have been taken on board.

Rating: Significant



Indicator #2 Percentage of representation of self-identified women’s rights and intersectional feminist movement leaders in Spotlight’s decision-making bodies at national level (steering committees), regional level (regional steering committees) and global level (operational steering committee).

Representatives of women’s rights groups and human rights-based civil society organizations (including those representing groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination) have been critically engaged in shaping the Initiative from its inception through governance and advisory roles.

⁴ 2019-2020 Global Reference Group Score Card

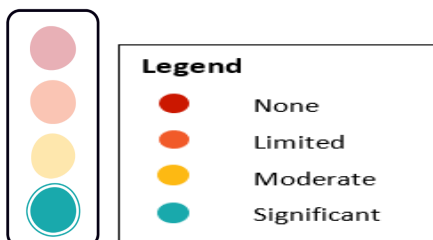
In addition to participation in Reference Groups, the Initiative ensures a full role in decision-making and representation of civil society within its governance structures: on National and Regional Steering Committees – the highest decision-making body at the programme level – and, at global level, the Global Operational Steering Committee and the Governing Body. In 2021, as a result, civil society partners were engaged in key decision-making related to programme and budget revisions, Phase II planning, COVID-19 response plans and annual workplans, which helped to improve the responsiveness of these plans to local contexts and to serve civil society’s needs. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, a number of recommendations from the National Reference Group were taken into consideration in the development of the Phase II proposal, including the integration of activities to increase awareness of duty bearers of the Istanbul Convention⁵.

“A key good practice agreed across all Reference Groups is our representation and participation in the governance and decision-making bodies. Civil society has heavily advocated to be part of these spaces because we know that this is where the UN, the EU, and governments sit together and we have a direct advocacy link to influence policy and implementation of the Initiative. This practice of bringing all stakeholders together, especially having a civil society representative independently chosen by the group, proves to be an essential foundational piece to any initiative, even beyond Spotlight.” Shamah Bulangis, Global Civil Society Reference Group member and representative to the Operational Steering Committee

It has also been acknowledged that women have and continue to be at the forefront of organized protest and resistance, envisioning alternatives to existing hegemonic systems and oppressive structures. Inspired and guided by these movements, the Spotlight Initiative continues to join forces with women led grassroots organizations and to position civil society organizations at the forefront of the Initiative’s efforts, magnifying the Spotlight Initiative’s support for their ongoing fight to end violence against women and girls. Notably, civil society, including feminist and women’s rights organizations, maintains meaningful participation and membership across all of Spotlight Initiative’s decision-making bodies (2021 Spotlight Global Annual Report).

Analysis:

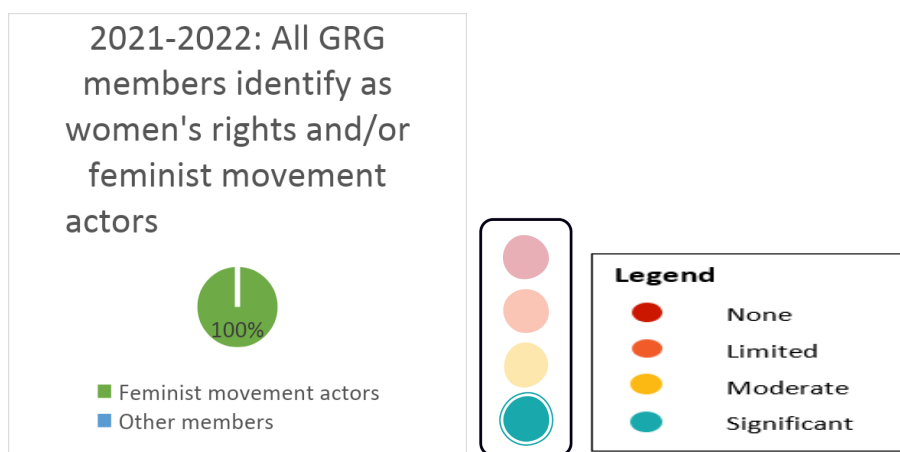
Rating: Significant



⁵ 2021 Spotlight Global Annual Report

Indicator #3b Percentage of representation of self-identified women's rights, intersectional and feminist movement leaders in CS-RGs at country, regional, and global levels.

As per the previous score card of 2019 -2020, the Global Reference group has maintained its representation with 100% self-identifying as women's rights and inter-sectional feminists' movement leaders. All the CS-RG members identify as women's rights and feminist movement leaders.



Indicator #5.(a) Extent to which Spotlight has created coordination mechanisms between country, regional, and global CS-RGs.

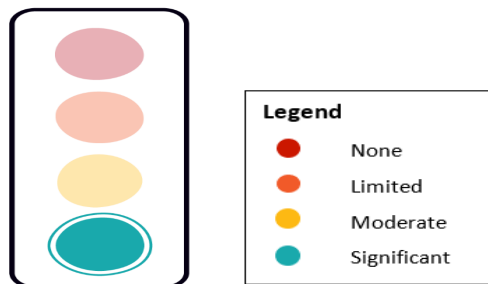
In 2021, to foster knowledge exchange, cross-regional meetings were held in February and November 2021. Held twice-annually, these meetings serve as a platform for feedback and exchange of experiences across Reference Group members and Spotlight Initiative colleagues, ensuring that members' advice is regularly reflected in the Initiative's work. The Global Reference Group also launched a focal point system across Reference Group members at global, regional and national levels. Focal points meet on a quarterly basis, and aim to further strengthen communication channels, conduct joint advocacy and facilitate the sharing of best practices among all Reference Groups. Finally, the Secretariat hosts a set of diverse online platforms to facilitate communication among Reference Group members, including a Civil Society Reference Group Community of Practice page on Facebook with over 230 members and a dedicated page on the Spotlight Initiative website.

At the programme level, National and Regional Steering Committees provide implementation oversight and coordination in country and regional programmes,

respectively. Steering Committees are context-specific and aligned with the priorities of each programme.

Analysis- there have been significant strides made in creating coordinating mechanisms across national, regional and the global RGs. Meetings are evidenced recordings of virtual meetings and minutes with specific actions being made arising out of recommendations from these meetings. These meeting have also enabled Regional and National RGs to better perform their roles.

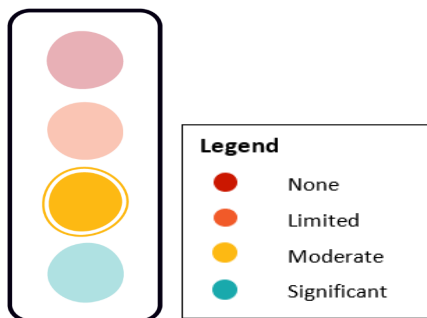
Rating: Significant



Indicator #5(b) Extent to which coordination mechanisms exist between CS-RGs and decision-making bodies within [or at] the country, regional or global level (i.e. the national/regional/Operational Steering Committee, Global Governing Body, Secretariat and other relevant bodies).

There is significant traction in the way CS-RGs and decision-making bodies engage. This is also evident in the way recommendations put forward by the RGS are implemented. The Global Reference Group put forward a series of recommendations for future action, including: adding an additional civil society representative in the Operational Steering Committee; simplifying procedures and systems that impede grassroots organizations and women’s movements from accessing and receiving funding; additional grant-based, demand-driven and flexible funding mechanisms; partnering with regional women’s funds and other grant-making women’s organizations; and additional resources and efforts for training in, and the full implementation of the Spotlight Initiative’s Specific Integrated Protection Approach in Spotlight Initiative countries and regions. The Global Reference Group coordinators were able to present the results of the analysis and recommendations to all Secretariat staff in December 2021. The Secretariat’s civil society engagement team committed to including them in its workplan for 2022.

More informal monitoring of the operations of the Spotlight Initiative and its engagement with civil society took place in March 2021, when the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat held its annual civil society consultation on the side-lines of the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The consultation highlighted gaps in the Initiative’s engagement with civil society, particularly the need to: 1) better reach grassroots organizations; 2) remunerate Reference Group members; and 3) provide flexible and demand-driven funding during crises and beyond. Concrete action points for improvement were made, including the development of a strategy proposal on how the Initiative will concretely improve on flexible funding.



Analysis: Whilst recommendations have been technically adopted, these still need to be fully implemented and monitored. For this reason, the rating is moderate.

Rating: Moderate

Indicator #5 (c) Extent to which the role of the CS-RGs is made clear by the Spotlight initiative.

When the SI commenced, the architect did not include CS-RGs. However, with lobbying from women’s rights activist there was the inclusion of CS-RGs at national, regional and global levels. A survey of RG members conducted in December 2022 showed the following:⁶

- Around 71 per cent of respondents noted that they are actively engaged in realizing the key objectives of the Reference Group,
- about 87 per cent shared that they can provide meaningful feedback, inputs, and suggestions to the Spotlight Initiative programme team. Both these figures show substantial improvement from 2021.

⁶ The SI RG December 2022 survey.

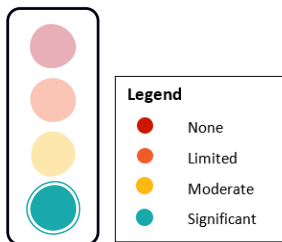
- Approximately 70 per cent of respondents stated that their role on the Reference Group was clear— representing an increase of nearly 20 per cent compared to 2021 data.
- Around 93 per cent of Reference Group members submitted a budgeted workplan or are in the process of developing one.
- Close to 55 per cent of respondents feel that the Reference Group offers space for members and their communities to be heard.
- Around 57 per cent of respondents felt that adherence to principles of leaving no one behind, transparency and inclusivity in the engagement of the Civil Society Reference Group has been high.

Analysis: There is significant improvement in the understanding of the ToRs by the Cs-RG. This can also be attributed to the increased engagement with the global governing body and the fact that recommendations made by the CS-RG are taken seriously. For instance, as the Civil Society National and Regional Reference Groups became increasingly operational, it was clear that members needed – and wanted – to allocate significant time and effort to make their membership impactful. Reference Group members called for financial compensation for members’ time and expertise, recognizing and valuing the engagement of civil society with the Spotlight Initiative and more broadly to ending violence against women and girls. In addition, the mid-term assessments, and metareview, found that while the commitment of the UNCT and the civil society reference group to civil society participation was a key driving force of success, a lack of financial remuneration constrained this. In April 2021, the Deputy Secretary-General made a strong recommendation to Resident Coordinators to improve their engagement with Reference Groups by looking into appropriate modalities to compensate members’ engagement. In response to this and the findings of the mid-term assessments, the Secretariat, with support of the RUNOs, has provided guidance to compensate the efforts of civil society reference group members. The Spotlight Initiative Secretariat engaged in wide ranging stakeholder consultations at all levels, developing a Guidance Note on Compensation of Civil Society Reference Group Members that sets out key parameters for compensation of Reference Group members while leaving room for programme teams to determine context-based solutions. Though the Secretariat’s guidance is intended to help facilitate compensation where appropriate and beneficial, the decision on whether to compensate Reference Group members ultimately lies with the Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team, in line with established practice in each country.

In 2021, the Civil Society National and Regional Reference Groups budgeted a total of USD 745,229 for their workplans,¹⁶ ranging from USD 4,000 to USD 115,000.¹⁷ The Global Reference Group budgeted USD 250,000 for a two-year workplan. Spotlight Initiative’s

commitment to allocate resources to this represents an important step in the international development sector, valuing the time, expertise and contributions of civil society.

Rating: Significant

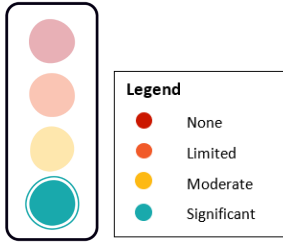


Indicator #5 (d) Extent to which the CS-RGs can influence their ToR.

The GRG was not established until April 2019, when the initiative was well underway at a global level, and so was not able to influence the design phase of the Initiative itself. However, the GRG did have a mandate to shape/rewrite our own ToRs once established: a process that began in late 2019. The revised and approved ToRs clarify and establish the GRG's role as strengthening both the Initiative's *effectiveness and accountability to the women's movement*. A 'moderate' score was given in for 2019 because there was lack of clarity on the ability to serve as effective advocates to Spotlight and participate in decision-making (which we were seeking through our revised ToRs). The granting of full membership to these bodies, and the finalization/approval of our revised ToRs, allowed the GRG to lift the score to 'significant' for 2020. In 2022, the score is increase to significant.

Analysis: In 2022, the SI Secretariat, in close collaboration with Reference Group members, developed a Guidance Note on achieving meaningful engagement and partnership with Civil Society Reference Groups, providing concrete guidance on meaningfully engaging Reference Group members on workplan development, budgeting, and monitoring. To track implementation of this guidance note, and further strengthen communication, collaboration and community between programme teams and Reference Groups, and among Reference Groups, two surveys of Reference Group members were conducted. The surveys gather information on the programme's adherence to the principle of leaving no one behind, civil society's influence in decision making bodies, the level of support provided to develop and implement a costed workplan, and coordination and communication with other Reference Groups. The survey results are shared with programme teams and Reference Groups, and this allows the Secretariat to provide targeted support where needed, informing guidance to strengthen engagement and partnership with civil society as well.

Rating: Significant



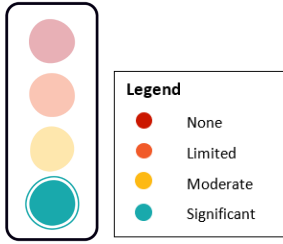
FUNDING MECHANISM

Indicator #7. Extent to which Spotlight’s calls for proposals and proposal assessment guidelines expressly prioritize groups that address an intersectional analysis of violence, including based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, age, race, ethnicity, and economic oppression, among other dimensions.

The sub-granting and subcontracting modalities are effective ways of expanding the grassroots outreach of the United Nations, allowing civil society partners to collaborate and channel funding to local and grassroots organizations that access funding and capacity-development opportunities that may not qualify under United Nations accountability and procedure standards. Indeed, the sub-grantor or subcontractor entity, often a larger national civil society organization, is usually better placed to ensure greater support and flexibility and to open opportunities for entities, which by virtue of their proximity, are naturally positioned to better reach and serve marginalized groups. As of December 2022, a total of 220 awards reported to have included sub-granting or subcontracting modalities, reaching an additional 911 sub-grantees or subcontractors, with at least USD 13 million.

Analysis – SI has provided a platform for inclusion without discrimination of groups such as persons with disabilities, the LGBTQI community and other local groups. The proposal assessments and guidelines provides guidance and equal opportunities for groups to apply without considering disability, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity among other dimensions which has been augmented by the consultations with CSRGs.

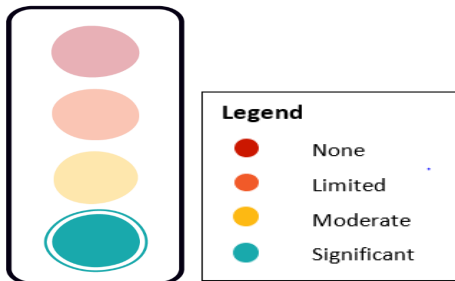
Rating: Significant



Indicator #8. Extent to which Spotlight’s calls for proposals and proposal assessment guidelines expressly prioritize groups that have a strong constituency base in local communities.

The Spotlight Call for Proposals and proposal assessment guidelines clearly highlight the prioritisation of local groups. The proposal assessment guidelines are also clear in terms of the requirements and considerations for eligibility of local groups. However, the proposal guidelines have often been limited to local groups compliance to local registration requirements, financial statements, and human resources. Some progress has been made to ensure that the proposal guidelines and calls for proposals are inclusive of local groups and their capacities small grants modalities have been engaged allowing for a more simplified application process and selection criteria which supports institutional strengthening and capacity building as highlighted in the 2021 SI Global Annual report. An example is the case of the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund included a new funding stream for institutional support to the calls for proposals in Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, and Haiti and this allowed local women’s rights organizations to receive both institutional and programmatic funding to strengthen their capacity and cover the costs of adapting to COVID-19 (2021 SI Global Annual Report). Against this backdrop, some feedback from the civil society and women’s rights organizations included the need to lengthen the timeframe for responding to advertisements, which was considered too short, contextualizing the requirements and simplifying the language of calls for proposals. (2022 SI Global Annual Report). These recommendations were effected.

Rating : Significant



Indicator #10. Percentage of funding that is granted/committed through an open, competitive grant making/partner selection process.

In response to the UN Trust Fund's 2020 Call for Proposals, 37 new grants were awarded for a total of USD 15 million in 27 countries and territories. The Call for proposals, which received 1,498 applications, was open to civil society organizations working on the front lines of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts to address and respond to violence against women and girls in the context of the pandemic. Most organizations receiving funding are women's rights organizations (65%), with half of organizations receiving small grants (18).

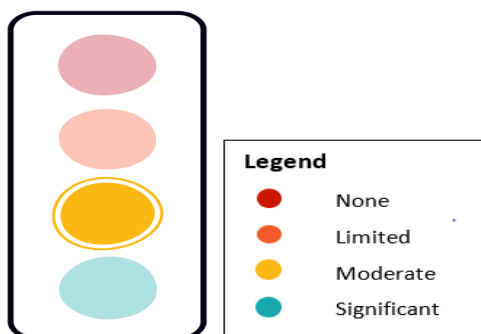
In response to the UN Trust Fund's 2021 Call for Proposals, 37 new grants were awarded for a total of USD 17 million. The Call for Proposals, which received 1,396 applications from 108 countries and territories, prioritized civil society-led, demand-driven initiatives that adopt an intersectional approach and the principle of leaving no one behind in working to end violence against women and girls, especially in the rapidly changing contexts and complex environments. Among the new grants, 73% are allocated to women's rights organizations, and 100% grantees of this cycle are women-led organizations. In addition, nearly 1 in 2 organizations selected this year are small organizations. Among those, 82% applied for a small grant.

Analysis: Standard language in the calls are 'focus on women-led, women's rights organizations'⁷ representing and working on behalf of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as those marginalized and excluded due to poverty, ethnicity, disability, age, geography, migratory status, HIV status, among others.⁸ 'Ensuring meaningful participation' of such groups was also part of the evaluation criteria.

Rating: Moderate

⁷ The 2019 WPHF Call was only open to 'national and local women led, or women's rights focused civil society organizations.' However other types of CSO were also eligible (if not a focus) in the 2019 UNTF EAW Call, which required applicants to be *either* a 'women-led and women's rights organizations' *or* 'another legally-registered civil society organization [or] network.'

⁸ Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund & Spotlight Initiative, *Call for Proposals for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria and Uganda*, June 2019, p.3.



Indicator #11. Percentage of funding that is allowed for core funding and more flexible funding especially in light of COVID 19.

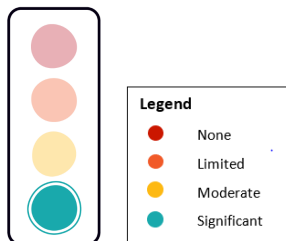
Flexible funding is key for an effective and responsive civil society. Civil society has continuously called for funding that allows for them to respond to emerging needs which may not have been budgeted for. Such funding may include core institutional funding which are funds not earmarked for specific programmatic activities or overhead costs related to delivering. Rather, the purpose of core institutional funding is to support an organization’s overall institutional capacity. Core funding may cover general operations and core costs, such as paying staff salaries and office rent, purchasing equipment and ICT services. Institutional funding also provides psychosocial support and health insurance for staff to put in place new adaptive strategies and systems or even to raise staff awareness and develop their capacities in technical areas. long-term funding. The Spotlight Initiative is continuously working to localize and decolonize resourcing by investing in grassroots women’s movements and organizations, and to push for change in the way funding is allocated, making it more flexible and locally driven. To ensure sustainability of funding and support for civil society, the Spotlight Initiative scaled up core and flexible funding to civil society organizations more broadly, particularly women’s rights organizations and grassroots community-based organizations. Flexible and feminist funding ensures greater women’s agency and leadership at the community level, applies an intersectional lens to funding, and redistributes power to communities, allowing local organizations to make decisions about how to address the challenges they face in their own environments and ultimately enhancing their impact⁹.

⁹ Angelika Arutyunova and Cindy Clark, Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots, 7 October 2013. Page 25.

Analysis: Core institutional funding and small grants Core institutional funding¹⁰ is essential to local women’s organizations’ survival and their ability to respond to changing circumstances and contexts; especially for local organizations working in complex and politically sensitive environments and in spaces where attacks and backlash against women’s rights (and women’s human rights defenders) threaten their work and existence. In December 2021, the Spotlight Initiative and the UN Foundation partnered to create the WithHer Fund with the goal of providing flexible funding to local, grassroots and women-led civil society organizations working to end violence against women and girls in their communities.

As of December 2022, USD 23 million had been invested in core institutional funding globally, of which USD 11 million comes from country and regional programmes and USD 12 million from the two Civil Society Grant Giving Programmes (through the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women). This corresponds to approximately 13 per cent of the total delivered amount to civil society organizations globally. The Spotlight Initiative is committed to continuing to increase this amount, ensuring that more core funding reaches civil society organizations and local groups.

Rating: Significant



Indicator #12. Extent to which the Spotlight grant management through the global level funds is responsive to contextual changes and flexible to adapt grant management procedures.

¹⁰ Core institutional funding can be defined by what it is not: it is not funding earmarked for specific programmatic activities or overhead costs related to delivering. Rather, the purpose of core institutional funding is to support an organization’s overall institutional capacity. Core funding may cover general operations and core costs, such as paying staff salaries and office rent, purchasing equipment and ICT services. Institutional funding also provides psychosocial support and health insurance for staff to put in place new adaptive strategies and systems or even to raise staff awareness and develop their capacities in technical areas.

The following programmatic, operational and technical challenges were identified as prominent in 2022:

- Political instability and security threatened the advancement of women's and girls' rights in some contexts.
- The ongoing climate crisis, natural disasters, and the global health pandemic/disease further exacerbated violence and threats to women's and girls' rights.
- It can be challenging to secure and sustain government engagement, particularly during government transition and shifting political priorities.
- Shifts in the political priorities of governments led to challenges in implementing comprehensive programming to eliminate violence against women and girls.
- Consistently (across programmes and contexts) engaging civil society meaningfully, as both partners and within governance structures, was demanding.
- Gaps in quality data on gender-based violence posed challenges to evidence-based decision making and advocacy efforts.
- Limited technical expertise in programming to end violence against women and girls in certain regions led to human resource gaps.

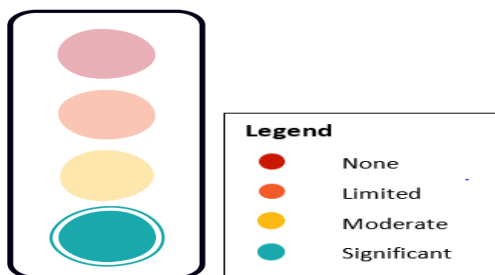
Analysis: To address these challenges there is need for funding that is responsive. Core and flexible support are crucial for sustained activism and movement building and demonstrate Spotlight Initiative's continued commitment to intentionally support the resilience and autonomy of civil society organizations and women's movements at large. Funding allocations to civil society also supported leaving no one behind: as of December 2022, across all outcome areas, 34 per cent of all contractual engagements with CSOs, i.e., awards, reached adolescents girls, 24 per cent reached rural women, 23 per cent reached women and girls living with disabilities and 60 per cent reached other marginalized groups¹¹.

There was significant positive response to the various challenges that the programme faced. Of note is the introduction of alternative sources of funding such as the WithHer Fund. This was for Mobilizing flexible financial support to frontline women's rights organizations in partnership with the UN Foundation, the Spotlight Initiative launched the WithHer Fund in 2021. Operating under feminist grant-making principles (flexibility, trust and transparency), the WithHer Fund channels flexible core funding to grassroots and women's organizations working to end violence against women and girls in their communities. The fund addresses the barriers to funding that small organizations often face by streamlining the application process, simplifying reporting, and offering smaller grants. The fund also aims to complement existing international grant-making mechanisms by raising money from new or untapped sources, such as the private sector and the public.

¹¹ 2022 SI Global Annual report

In 2022, the WithHer Fund continued to provide institutional funding to its first cohort of six grantees – working in Argentina, Belize, El Salvador, Malawi, Mali, and Trinidad and Tobago. From supporting deaf women in Argentina to ending child marriage in Mali, the organizations are proving that local organizations led by women are best suited to support survivors of violence and challenge harmful social norms in their communities. The grantees are changing the lives of women and girls in their community. Seed funding for the first cohort of grantees was made possible with initial support from the UN Foundation, as well as The Estée Lauder Companies Charitable Foundation, and the H&M Foundation totalling USD 180,000. In 2022, the WithHer Fund mobilized additional funding through new partnerships with Liberty Latin America and Target Foundation.

Rating: significant



Indicator #13. Extent to which the national and regional grant management and call for proposals procedures is accessible to grassroots organizations.

The recently completed meta-review of the Spotlight Initiative mid-term assessments in Latin America and Africa identified that the most significant obstacles to civil society participation were related to structural and administrative barriers that exist within the United Nations – financial rules and procedures that have been approved and mandated by agencies’ respective Boards. This suggests a level of risk aversion by United Nations programme teams to trusting major interventions to national or grassroots civil society organizations, even when these organizations meet the United Nations’ accountability requirements and demonstrate the expertise and experience required. When the United Nations adapts its process and procedures, civil society partnerships, including with local groups, are strengthened.

The Spotlight Initiative in Trinidad and Tobago, together with the Civil Society National Reference Group, held a series of field and virtual consultations with civil society organizations to brainstorm ways to simplify United Nations processes and funding approaches to make them more accessible for women’s rights organizations and

community-based organizations at the grassroots level. A range of civil society organizations were consulted – some in operation longer than others; some larger than others – with a significant proportion working in rural communities and representing marginalized groups. The consultations addressed the administrative and managerial requirements attached to United Nations funding, which often constrain grassroots groups’ ability to access much-needed funding. Feedback from the civil society and women’s rights organizations included the need to lengthen the timeframe for responding to advertisements, which was considered too short, contextualizing the requirements, and simplifying the language of calls for proposals. Following this, the Spotlight Initiative programme drafted easy-to-understand advertisements and bidding templates.

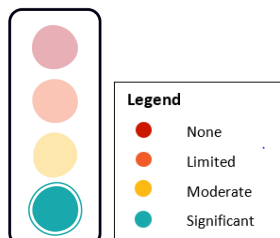
‘Top tips’ and guidelines for completing the submission templates were also shared. Proposals focused on building the capacity of community organizations and women’s movements were encouraged, as were proposals that prioritized the inclusion of grassroots civil society organizations and civil society organizations representing marginalized and vulnerable groups. Pre-scheduled town halls accompanied each advertisement, providing a tailored and detailed walk-through of submission requirements. The timeframe for submission was lengthened, and rotating advertisements were posted with no submission deadline. Concurrently, a Master Coach and Agitator-in-Chief was recruited to develop a comprehensive capacity-building programme for civil society organizations, including support for resource mobilization. The Master Coach will be joined by business-focused coaches who will be paired with civil society organizations to provide support through their engagement with a project. Through these changes and the support received, organizations that felt that United Nations funding was previously inaccessible submitted successful proposals, and the Spotlight Initiative team funded 15 new organizations between 2020 and 2022. All organizations were new to the United Nations system, receiving funding for the first time to strengthen their existing services and systems, for internal capacity-building, and to deepen their programmatic expertise.

Analysis: The Spotlight Initiative intentionally worked at the programme level to simplify grant-making processes and expand its outreach to diversify its partners and funding allocations. As a result, as of December 2022, the Spotlight Initiative programmes provided 34 per cent¹² of the delivered global civil society funding to new partners that had not previously worked with the respective United Nations agency. Further addressing the challenges associated with getting United Nations funding to smaller, grassroots groups, in 2022, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat developed a Learning Brief on Inclusive Civil Society Funding that identified systemic barriers to inclusive funding (like onerous application and

¹² SI 2021 Global Annual Report

reporting processes and limiting funding criteria) and linked these with promising practices and recommendations on how to fund civil society organizations more holistically and sustainably.

Rating: Significant



Indicator #14. Extent to which funding mechanisms are transparent.

In 2022, fifteen per cent of Spotlight programmes' activity funds¹³ (USD 48.5 million) were allocated to Pillar 6, nearly exceeding the Initiative's target (10-15 per cent). This is an increase of USD 7 million from December 2021, and further strengthens and sustains organizational resilience to continue to do this important work.

DISBURSEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Indicator #16. b) Percentage of total program funds that ultimately reaches grassroots organizations.

As the mid-term assessments, and meta-review found, despite Spotlight Initiative's commitment, low levels of funding are flowing directly to grassroots organizations, reflecting the extent to which UN agency specific recruitment and funding processes and procedures are difficult and, at times, impossible to comply with for small, local civil society organisations. In response to this historical challenge, in 2019, the Spotlight Initiative Secretariat launched the Grassroots Action Plan, which includes concrete recommendations on how programmes can simplify partnership processes and make them more inclusive, to be able to go beyond the "usual suspects" and reach new partners. As of December 2021, cumulatively Spotlight Initiative programmes allocated 49 per cent, or about USD 179 million, of activity funds to civil society organizations, achieving its commitment to delivering 30-50 per cent of Spotlight Initiative programme funds through civil society organizations.

¹³ SI 2021 Global Annual Report.

This is an increase of approximately USD 33 million from the previous year. All five regions in which the Initiative works are exceeding the minimum target of 30 per cent, with Central Asia leading at 60 per cent. Of the allocated civil society funds, a total of USD 144.5 million was already awarded to civil society organizations, an increase of close to USD 48 million from 2020. This means that programmes have now delivered about 81 per cent of the total allocated funding for civil society organizations¹⁴.

The Spotlight Initiative's fund allocation to civil society as of 31 December 2022:

Regional overview of selected data

Regions	Percentage of activity funds allocated to CSOs	Percentage of delivered funds to national, local and grassroots organizations	Percentage of delivered funds to local and grassroots organizations	Percentage of delivered funds to women-led, women's rights and feminist organizations	Percentage of delivered funds to new partners to the UN agencies
Africa	43%	80%	10%	64%	28%
Latin America	44%	73%	15%	69%	47%
Pacific	41%	75%	20%	63%	19%
Caribbean	36%	79%	35%	80%	26%
Central Asia	58%	77%	16%	92%	24%
UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund	100%	82%	39%	94%	54%
Safe and Fair ¹⁴	36%	70%	0%	68%	28%
Global total	48%	79%	19%	73%	34%

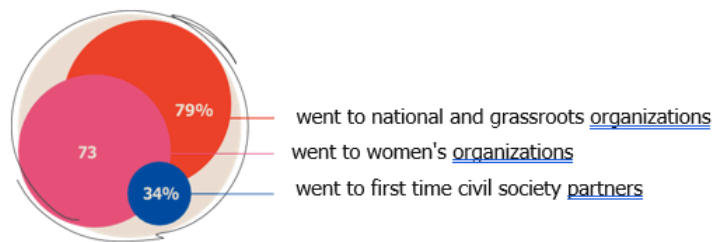
Spotlight Initiative's fund allocation to Civil Society as of 31 December 2021 (in US Dollars)

Region*	Overall funds allocated to the civil society as of end of 2021	Overall funds delivered to the civil society as of end of 2021
Africa	83,729,092	69,352,782
Latin America	14,941,813	11,312,309
Pacific	10,754,522	10,431,325
Caribbean	9,726,244	8,363,138
Central Asia	13,133,082	6,183,772
WPHF and UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women	36,796,835	33,659,404
Safe and Fair	9,818,535	5,204,320
Global Total	178,900,123	144,507,050

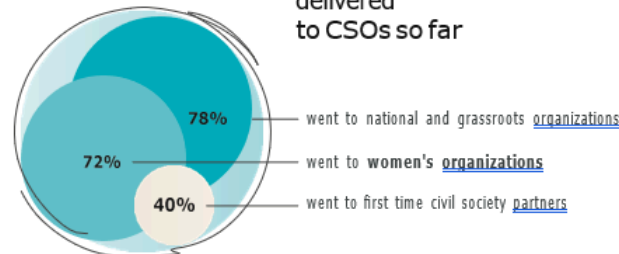
A comparison of 2021 and 2022 fund allocations to civil society

¹⁴ SI 2021 Global Annual Report

2022- Of the **USD 174 million** delivered to CSOs so far



2021 - Of the **USD 144.5 million** delivered to CSOs so far



Percentage of funds allocated to CSOs between 2021 and 2022

In line with the principle of localization, the Spotlight Initiative recognizes that civil society organizations and movements anchored in local communities are best placed to reach marginalized groups and to pursue sustainable solutions to end violence against women and girls in their communities. Feminist and women’s rights organizations and movements are critical to driving change and advancing women’s human rights. Despite the centrality of their role, women’s rights organizations and autonomous feminist movements remain severely and chronically underfunded. The Spotlight Initiative sought to address this

resource gap by applying an inclusive, human rights-based, and feminist approach to funding that disrupts the existing landscape and deep-rooted power imbalances to shift money and decision-making power to grassroots and local women's organizations and movements. This ranges from 18 per cent in Central Asia to 12 per cent in Latin America. This figure does not include the Safe and Fair programme in the ASEAN region given its different programmatic structure, as well as the UN Trust Fund and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund programmes. If the UN Trust Fund and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund programmes, which allocate their entire activity costs to Pillar 6, are included, the overall amount for Pillar 6 is 85 million USD, or 23 per cent of the overall activity costs. focused on supporting autonomous women's movements, and through mainstreamed support and partnership across all other Pillars of the programme. Fifteen per cent of Spotlight programmes' activity funds (USD 48.5 million) have been allocated to Pillar 6, nearly exceeding the Initiative's target (10-15 per cent). This is an increase of USD 7 million from December 2021, and further strengthens and sustains organizational resilience to continue to do this important work. The Spotlight Initiative's Civil Society Grant Giving Programmes complement this approach in partnership with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. As a result, the Spotlight Initiative is globally channelling half of its programmatic funding to civil society organizations, and in particular, national and local women's organizations and organizations to sustain movements and advance efforts to eliminate violence against women and girls.

To resource these organizations (and help address the chronic funding gap they face), as of December 2022. The Spotlight Initiative had delivered 73 per cent (USD 127 million) of civil society funding directly to women-led and/or women's rights organizations¹⁵. This is an additional USD 23 million from the previous reporting period of 2021.

Overall, as of the end of 2022, the Spotlight Initiative had budgeted USD 504.7 million across its 26 country programmes; five regional programmes and the Safe and Fair programme in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and two Civil Society Grant-Giving Programmes, partnering with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) for programmes in Africa and Latin America, and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) for programmes in Africa, Afghanistan, Haiti and Papua New Guinea. This includes USD 32.2 million in additional Phase II programming approved by the Spotlight Initiative's Operational Steering Committee to 14 country and regional programmes in Asia. Cumulatively Spotlight Initiative programmes allocated 48 per cent, or about USD 190 million, of activity funds to civil society organizations (CSOs). This represents an increase of approximately USD 11 million from the previous year of 2021. Of the USD 190

¹⁵ This number includes awards delivered through the UN Trust Fund and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund grant-giving programmes

million¹⁶ allocated to civil society, USD 174 million has been delivered so far, with 79 per cent reaching national, local and grassroots organisations, and 34 per cent going to new partners, diversifying the civil society base. USD 127 million, or 73 per cent of delivered funds, was invested in women’s organisations, and USD 23 million was invested in core support to civil society.

Overall, across the Initiative’s portfolio, USD 48 million or 15 per cent of activity funds¹⁷ have been allocated to Pillar 6, reaching women’s movements and grassroots feminist organisations. Sub-granting and subcontracting modalities have also been used to expand grassroots outreach and improve grassroots and local groups’ access to funding opportunities they may not otherwise qualify for under standard United Nations procedures. As of December 2022, a total of 220 awards included sub-granting or subcontracting modalities, reaching an additional 911 sub-grantees or subcontractors, with at least USD 13 million.

Of the delivered funds, 79 per cent reached national, local and grassroots organizations, and 73 per cent was invested directly in women’s organizations, a slight increase from the previous reporting period, but crucial for sustained activism and movement-building. As of 2022, the Spotlight Initiative continued to exceed its target of delivering 50-70 per cent of civil society organization funding to national, local and grassroots organizations (as noted above, 79 per cent of funding delivered to civil society went to national, local and grassroots groups), of which USD 33 million or 19 per cent went exclusively to local and grassroots organizations. This is an additional USD 8 million from the previous reporting period, demonstrating the sustained and increased focus of the Initiative’s support to local actors (2022 SI Global Annual report).

In 2022, the Spotlight Initiative exceeded its targeted funding commitments to civil society organizations and local women’s rights organizations. During the reporting period, Spotlight Initiative continued to achieve its commitment of delivering 30–50 per cent of programme funds through civil society organizations. As of December 2022, cumulatively Spotlight Initiative programmes allocated 48 per cent, or about USD 190 million, of activity funds to civil society organizations. This is an increase of approximately USD 11 million from the previous year. All five regions in which the Spotlight Initiative works are exceeding the minimum target of 30 per cent, with Central Asia leading at over 58 per cent¹⁸.

¹⁶ This includes USD 36.8 million allocated to CSOs by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

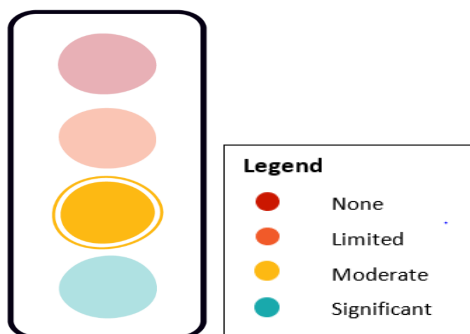
¹⁷ SI 2022 Global Annual Report

¹⁸ For the purpose of this report, Afghanistan is included in the Central Asia region.

Out of the USD 190 million allocated, a total of USD 174 million has been delivered to civil society organizations to date, an increase of over USD 29 million from 2021. This means that programmes have now delivered about 91 per cent of the total allocated funding for civil society organization. Of the delivered funds, 79 per cent reached national, local and grassroots organizations, and 73 per cent was invested directly in women’s organizations, a slight increase from the previous reporting period, but crucial for sustained activism and movement-building.

Analysis: There has been a significant shift in the funding that reaches grassroots organisations through CSOs. A mechanism still needs to be built into the SI to ensure that grassroots organisations’ capacity is built to enable them to directly access funds.

Rating: Moderate

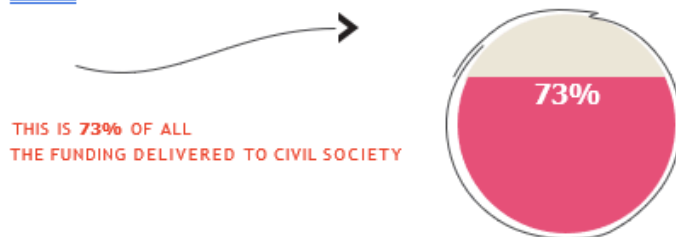


Indicator #18. b) Percent of (grants through global-level UN funds) reaching constituency-led women’s rights, girl’s rights and feminist organizations and networks

As of 31 December 2021, the Spotlight Initiative had programmed USD 477,828,188 through 26 country programmes across five regions; six regional programmes (including the “Safe and Fair” programme in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)); and two civil society grant-giving programmes (partnering with the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) for programmes in Africa and Latin America, and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) for programmes in Africa, Afghanistan,

Haiti and Papua New Guinea)¹⁹. In 2021, the Spotlight Initiative programme portfolio increased by USD 80,761,716, as the Operational Steering Committee approved additional allocations for Phase II for the Latin America Regional Programme and for Argentina, El Salvador, Honduras, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. All other Spotlight Initiative programmes remained in Phase I implementation for 2021. From its inception to the end of 2021, Spotlight Initiative has disbursed USD 386,537,466 to programmes, of which USD 91,474,929 was disbursed in 2021. The largest amount of funding disbursed in 2021 was allocated to the Africa region, followed by the Pacific region. Cumulatively, Spotlight Initiative programmes allocated USD 179 million or 49 per cent of activity funds to civil society organizations (CSOs), achieving the Initiative’s commitment to delivering 30-50per cent of programme funds through civil society organizations. All five regions in which the Initiative works exceeded the minimum target of 30 per cent, with Central Asia²⁰ leading at 60 per cent.

In 2022 USD 127 million invested in women's organizations, an additional 23 million from 2021



In 2021 USD 104 million invested in women's organizations, an additional 28 million from 2020



Investments made towards women’s organisations between 2021 and 2022

As of December 2022, the Spotlight Initiative had exceeded its funding commitments to civil society. Cumulatively Spotlight Initiative programmes allocated 48 per cent, or about

¹⁹ SI 2021 Global Annual Report

²⁰ SI 2021 Global Annual Report

USD 190 million²¹, of activity funds to civil society organizations (CSOs). This represents an increase of approximately USD 11 million from the previous year. Of the USD 190 million allocated to civil society, USD 174 million has been delivered so far, with 79 per cent reaching national, local and grassroots organizations, and 34 per cent going to new partners, diversifying the civil society base. USD 127 million, or 73 per cent of delivered funds, was invested in women's organizations, and USD 23 million was invested in core support to civil society. Core and flexible support are crucial for sustained activism and movement- building and demonstrate Spotlight Initiative's continued commitment to intentionally support the resilience and autonomy of civil society organizations and women's movements at large. Funding allocations to civil society also supported leaving no one behind: as of December 2022, across all outcome areas, 34 per cent of all contractual engagements with CSOs, i.e., awards, reached adolescents girls, 24 per cent reached rural women, 23 per cent reached women and girls living with disabilities and 60 per cent reached other marginalized groups²². Overall, across the Initiative's portfolio, USD 48 million or 15 per cent of activity funds²³ have been allocated to Pillar 6, reaching women's movements and grassroots feminist organizations. Sub-granting and subcontracting modalities have also been used to expand grassroots outreach and improve grassroots and local groups' access to funding opportunities they may not otherwise qualify for under standard United Nations procedures. As of December 2022, a total of 220 awards included sub- granting or subcontracting modalities, reaching an additional 911 sub-grantees or subcontractors, with at least USD 13 million.

Funding women-led, women's rights and feminist organizations as mentioned above, feminist and women's rights organizations and movements are critical to driving change and advancing women's human rights. To resource these organizations (and help address the chronic funding gap they face), the Spotlight Initiative has delivered 73 per cent (USD 127 million) of civil society funding directly to women-led and/or women's rights organizations.

²¹ This includes USD 36.8 million allocated to CSOs by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

²² Responding to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination various groups face, each CSO award can report to have reached multiple marginalized, vulnerable and traditionally left behind populations at the same time. Therefore, the data presented in this section in Chapter 4 is counted against the total number of CSO awards reported, and is not mutually exclusive.

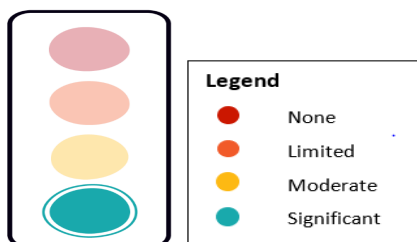
²³ This does not include the Safe and Fair programme in the ASEAN region given its different programmatic structure, as well as the UN Trust Fund and Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund programmes. Together with UN Trust Fund and Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund programmes, which allocate their entire activity costs to Pillar 6, the overall amount for Pillar 6 is 85 million USD, or 23 per cent of the overall activity costs.

This is an additional USD 23 million from the previous reporting period. Deep and intentional (quality) investment in women’s organizations accelerates change in the lives of women and girls and has a ripple effect across all of society.

Analysis: It has been established that Feminist and women’s rights organizations and movements are critical to driving change and advancing women’s human rights. To resource these organizations (and help address the chronic funding gap they face), the Spotlight Initiative has delivered 73 per cent (USD 127 million) of civil society funding directly to women-led and/or women’s rights organizations²⁴. This is an additional USD 23 million from the previous reporting period of 2021. Deep and intentional (quality) investment in women’s organizations accelerates change in the lives of women and girls and has a ripple effect across all of society.

Autonomous women’s and feminist movements are essential to advancing progressive policies to end violence against women and girls and, more broadly, to creating long-term societal transformations towards equality and justice. Despite the centrality of their role, women’s rights organizations and autonomous feminist movements remain severely and chronically underfunded. The Spotlight Initiative sought to address this resource gap by applying an inclusive, human rights-based, and feminist approach to funding that disrupts the existing landscape and deep-rooted power imbalances to shift money and decision-making power to grassroots and local women’s organizations and movements. WithHer Fund targets resources directly to grassroots women’s organizations working to end violence against women and girls in their communities.

Rating: Significant



Indicator #21 b) Extent to which Spotlight has adopted an integrated protection approach (based on EU and UN guidelines and resolutions) to secure the safety of women human rights defenders

²⁴ This number includes awards delivered through the UN Trust Fund and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund grant-giving programmes

Threats and attacks against human rights defenders increased in 2022, with women human rights defenders disproportionately targeted. This backlash against women's rights, institutions and organizations is often led by antidemocratic forces, politicizing the rights of women and girls as part of a broader agenda, shrinking civic space and threatening to roll back decades of progress²⁵. Additionally, women and girls continue to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated existing inequalities and contributed to an increase in violence against women and girls²⁶. As a result, women report feeling more unsafe than they felt before the pandemic. Further, while the pandemic shone a light on the crisis of violence against women and girls, as the world transitions to a post-pandemic reality, that light has faded, and many States have failed to treat this rights violation as the emergency that it is.

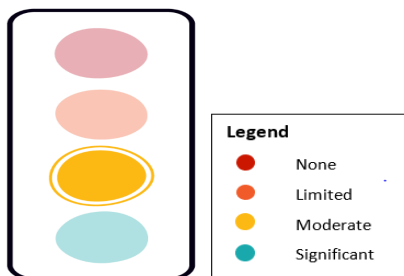
In addition to the impact of COVID-19, ongoing conflicts and protracted crises, including those in Afghanistan, Haiti, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen and Ukraine, among others, continued to have a severe and disproportionate impact on women and girls globally, resulting in widening inequality, a cost-of living crisis and increasing threats of food insecurity and energy poverty. Concurrently, the climate crisis has also had a devastating impact on women's livelihoods, health and well-being. The combined impact of COVID-19, conflict and insecurity and the targeted attack on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights has weakened global efforts toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5 on gender equality. Data from 2021 showed that it would take 286 years to achieve gender equality, while data for 2023 underscored that it would take 300 years to achieve gender equality. In the face of these and other intersecting crises, massive movements fuelled by women in all their diversity and youth are demanding justice, inclusion and rights, including the right to sexual and reproductive health, education, economic security, movement and participation. As the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and others have underscored, "across the globe, feminist, women's rights and gender justice [activists, movements and defenders] are challenging the agendas of fascist and fundamentalist actors, agendas that target women, persons who are non-conforming in their gender identity, expression and sexual orientation, and other oppressed communities." Women have and continue to be at the forefront of organized protest and resistance, envisioning alternatives to existing hegemonic systems and oppressive structures.

Analysis: Whilst there is acknowledgement of an increase in the attacks on WHRD, there is no clear evidence of concrete steps taken by the SI to ensure that systems are in place to protect human rights defenders.

²⁵ Revenge of the Patriarchs: Why Autocrats Fear Women (Foreign Affairs, March/April 2022)

²⁶ The Economic Impact on Women of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Rating : Moderate



Indicator # 22) Extent to which clear steps have been identified by Spotlight including the engagement of external review committees, coordination with existing women’s funding mechanisms, and accountability mechanisms to support a competitive and open process

The Spotlight Initiative has been instrumental in engaging the civil society members through the CSRRG and these have played a pivotal role as external review committees in most grants awarded to small organisations. The 2022 SI Global Annual report highlights that Reference Group members were also invited to join the evaluation panel of the call for small grants launched in February 2022, which is an innovative practice that allows for increased transparency and decision-making for civil society in United Nations processes.

It is also important to note that the Spotlight Initiative in Trinidad and Tobago, together with the Civil Society National Reference Group, held a series of field and virtual consultations with civil society organizations to brainstorm ways to simplify United Nations processes and funding approaches to make them more accessible for women’s rights organizations and community-based organizations at the grassroots level.²⁷ A range of civil society organizations were consulted – some in operation longer than others; some larger than others – with a significant proportion working in rural communities and representing marginalized groups.

The consultations addressed the administrative and managerial requirements attached to United Nations funding, which often constrain grassroots groups’ ability to access much-needed funding. According to 2022 SI Global Annual Report, the Spotlight Initiative programme drafted easy-to-understand advertisements and bidding templates. ‘Top tips’ and guidelines for completing the submission templates were also shared. Proposals focused on building the capacity of community organizations and women’s movements were encouraged, as were proposals that prioritized the inclusion of grassroots civil society

²⁷ SI 2022 Global Annual Report

organizations and civil society organizations representing marginalized and vulnerable groups. Pre-scheduled town halls accompanied each advertisement, providing a tailored and detailed walk-through of submission requirements. The timeframe for submission.

Analysis: It is prudent to note that the SI has played a significant role in ensuring inclusion of civil society organisations as ‘watch dogs’ to the funding mechanisms and the level of engagement with local groups/grassroots organisations and the rollout of the SI programme and the relationship with the set outcomes and pillars. The UNTF also invited CSOs to participate in the review of the 2023 proposals which were submitted in response to the call for proposals.

Rating: Significant

